

How do I...

## CHANGE THE USE OF AN EXISTING BUILDING?

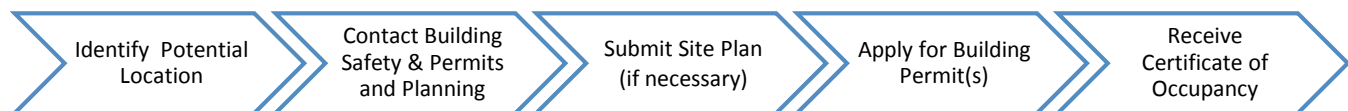


Are you moving your business into an existing building? If so, we are here to help! Our goal is to partner with new and existing employers and to serve as a resource to maximize success. This guide will help you through the process to ensure you are on your way to opening your business.

A change of use occurs when there is any change in the occupancy of a building that could trigger a change in the code requirements that apply to the site.

In some cases, this is a change to a completely different use than that which previously occupied the building. For example, a maintenance building conversion into a gymnasium or a warehouse space into an indoor sports facility. In other instances, this is a change in use within the same occupancy classification, but at a different occupancy level; for example, a new restaurant with an increased number of seats or a new child care operation serving a larger number of children.

It is important for these changes to be reviewed by the County to ensure that the site can accommodate the type of use that is proposed, and most importantly, that the building meets all requirements for public safety.



### STEP 1: Contact the Building Safety & Permits Division

Once you have identified a specific location, the Building Safety & Permits Division can assist you in determining what, if any, improvements may be necessary to the building to meet the requirements of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code and what is needed to receive a Certificate of Occupancy for your new business. Call the Division at 757-253-6626 to set up an appointment for a code review.

**Helpful Tip #1.** Contact the Office of Economic Development at 253-6607 and ask about new business resources (such as the free *Guide to Doing Business in JCC*), incentives and other business support.

**Helpful Tip #2.** Check out the website: [www.yesjamestownva.com](http://www.yesjamestownva.com) for our online business center.

### STEP 2: Contact the Planning & Zoning Office

When looking for an existing building for your business, it is important to know what a property is zoned. The zoning of a property will determine whether a use is permitted, specially permitted, or not permitted. You can find out the zoning district of any property by using the County's online [Property Information](#) system.

The permitted and specially permitted uses in each district are identified in Use List sections of each district in the [County Code](#). If you have any questions on how a certain use may be defined in the Zoning Ordinance, please contact the Zoning Division at 757-253-6671.

When you have found a site you think would be suitable for your business, please contact us and let us know your plans. The Planning Division, in coordination with other County agencies, will verify that the use is permitted, there is adequate parking, utilities and fire safety, and if there are any applicable proffers or conditions associated with the property. If you are planning to make improvements to the exterior of the property, we can help you with the conceptual plan review process.

**Helpful Tip #3.** Each location and business need is unique, so the steps may vary. By contacting the Planning & Zoning Office, you will be advised as to which steps are required for your particular needs and site.

**Helpful Tip #4.** It is important that you collect the information noted above BEFORE signing a lease or purchasing property, so you can be sure the location you choose allows your type of business.

### STEP 3: Submit a Site Plan (If Necessary)

A site plan is required whenever the footprint for a building will change, or there will be changes to utility lines or existing parking lots. A site plan is also needed for commercial additions such as sheds, storage areas, fences and concrete pads. The Planning Division, in coordination with other County agencies, will review the plan to ensure that it meets all requirements, such as building setbacks, handicap accessibility, and stormwater management and utility service standards. ([Click here for application](#))

### STEP 4: Apply for a Building Permit(s)

The Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC) designates every building according to its intended use. The uses are divided into specific categories based on several factors including fire hazard, number of persons and general public safety. When the use of a building changes, the USBC requirements may also change. Therefore, a building permit is necessary in order to verify that these requirements have been met. If the building does not meet the requirements for the proposed use, the necessary changes must be made before a Certificate of Occupancy can be issued. A building permit must also be obtained for any optional changes you wish to make to the building.

**Helpful Tip #5.** In most instances, steps three and four can occur simultaneously to avoid conflicts and expedite the process.

### STEP 5: Receive a Certificate of Occupancy

Once the Planning Division has completed their review and the Building Safety and Permits Division has determined that the building meets all USBC requirements, the Building Official will issue a Certificate of Occupancy allowing you to move into the space.

**Helpful Tip #6.** Because any number of factors could delay the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy, the County strongly recommends that you do not schedule or announce grand openings prior to actual receipt of a C.O.

**Helpful Tip #7.** Temporary Sign Permits announcing Grand Openings are required, but they can be approved administratively and quickly!

### Other Information:

If you are having difficulty locating a potential location for your business, the Office of Economic Development (757-253-6607) may also be able to assist you in finding properties that are available.

#### For More Information:

Planning Division, 757-253-6685  
Zoning Division, 757-253-6671  
Building Safety and Permits Division, 757-253-6626  
Engineering and Resource Protection, 757-253-6670  
Office of Economic Development, 757-253-6607